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AUTHORITY

AGO D/A ltr, 29 Apr 1980

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310**

IN REPLY REFER TO
AGAM-P (M) (20 Mar 67) FOR OT

22 March 1967

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, HQ, 588th Engineer Battalion

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Forwarded as inclosure is Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 588th Engineer Battalion for quarterly period ending 31 October 1966. Information contained in this report should be reviewed and evaluated by CDC in accordance with paragraph 6f of AR 1-19 and by CONARC in accordance with paragraph 6c and d of AR 1-19. Evaluations and corrective actions should be reported to ACSFOR OT within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.
2. Information contained in this report is provided to the Commandants of the Service Schools to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations, and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

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STATEMENT #2 UNCLASSIFIED

KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

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HEADQUARTERS
588TH ENGINEER BATTALION (C)(A)
APO U.S. Forces 95353

JAN 3 1967

EBB-CO

14 November 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned (RCS CSFOR-65), for Quarterly Period Ending (31 Oct 66) (Aug Sep Oct)

THRU: Commanding Officer
79th Engineer Group (Const)
APO 96491

Commanding General
18th Engineer Brigade
APO 96307

Commanding General
United States Army Vietnam
ATTN: AVC-DH
APO 96307

Commander In Chief
United States Army, Pacific
ATTN: GPOP-MH
APO 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army (ACSFOR DA)
Washington, D.C. 20310

Section 1. Significant Organization or Unit Activities.

1. On 2 August 1966, the 588th Engineer Battalion received the mission of cantonment construction at Tay Ninh in support of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. One platoon of B Company, 588th Engineer Battalion departed Cu Chi by armed motor vehicle convoy on 3 August 1966 and arrived at Tay Ninh on same date. The base camp area had already been secured by the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and the initial phases of base camp development had been initiated by Company A, 65th Engineer Battalion. Responsibility for base camp construction was shifted to

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the 588th Engineer Battalion (C) ~~in preparation for the withdrawal of~~ the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and Company A, 65th Engineer Battalion on 15 August 1966.

2. On 3 August 1966, the platoon from C Company, 588th Engineer Battalion that was repairing the airstrip at Vo Dat, completed the mission and returned to Long Thanh. The runway was able to land C-130 aircraft upon completion of the mission. This mission began on 27 July 1966 and was extremely hampered by rain and enemy harassing tactics. Backfilling of existing potholes with dry stabilized fill material was most difficult because of the heavy monsoon rains. In addition, Viet Cong mortar and sniper fire at night necessitated this platoon to work during the day and augment the area security forces with ~~... their men~~ their men at night.

3. On 8 August 1966, the remainder of B Company, 588th Engineer Battalion, departed Cu Chi by motor vehicle convoy and arrived at Tay Ninh to begin the cantonment development.

4. On 13 August 1966, C Company, 588th Engineer Battalion, commenced project Bdo 66-176DC-79, 400 Bed Evacuation Hospital at Cu Chi with beneficial occupancy date for the hospital of 1 November 1966.

5. On 15 August 1966, the main portion of the platoon of A Company returned from Hoc Mon to Cu Chi. Project Bde 65-53C-79 was temporarily halted due to contractor default in the delivery of laterite for the construction of roads and hardstands. It was decided to return the platoon to Cu Chi until the dispute was settled. All vertical construction had been completed.

6. On 17 August 1966, the battalion received a combat support mission of clearing approximately ~~450~~ acres of rubber trees adjacent to the northern portion of the Cu Chi Base Camp perimeter. The area is referred to as the Filhol Plantation and had been used extensively by Viet Cong elements in the Cu Chi area. The area is typified by rubber trees ranging between four and forty-eight inches in diameter, with an average diameter of twelve inches. The area also has uncultivated vegetation growing throughout the plantation. The machine used to clear the area was a Rome K/G Cutting Blade attached to an Allis-Chalmers HD-16M tractor as a means of rapid cutting and windrowing. For this area four tractors with cutting blades were utilized by this battalion. During the eleven day period, the average acres cleared was 1.18 per dozer hour. The average windrowing was 1.13 acres per dozer hour, with a combined average of .57 acres per dozer hour. On the tenth day of the operation, four antitank mines were detonated by three dozers. Extensive damage to the dozers was sustained but no operator was injured. On the eleventh day after the commencement, the mission was aborted due to non-availability of equipment, resulting from antitank mines.

7. On 20 August 1966, the tunnel destruction team from Company A, returned from their mission in Tuy Hoa. The team destroyed six bunkers with 100% effectiveness. Four of the bunkers were destroyed using the acetylene generator with 15 pounds carbide and $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds water. Detonation was achieved with one quarter pound block of TNT. The remaining two bunkers were destroyed by placing two pounds of carbide into a vase containing three quarts of water. The mixture was dropped through a hole in the entrance. Detonation was achieved by a hand grenade.

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8. On 22 August 1966, the remainder of C Company closed at Cu Chi, from Ling Thanh by motor vehicle convoy. C Company was relocated to support the battalion's cantonment development efforts at Cu Chi and to construct a 400 Bed Evacuation Hospital at this location.

9. During the month of August, the 588th Engineer Battalion continued to support the 65th Engineer Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, in combat missions of road maintenance of Route 1 & 22 between Cu Chi and Tay Ninh.

10. On 16 September 1966, the battalion received the mission to repair potholes in the airstrip located at Dau Tieng, Vic GC-XT 495473. The airstrip was secured by the 4/503d Infantry Battalion (Airborne), 173d Infantry Brigade (Airborne).

On 17 September 1966, a reinforced platoon of Company A, 588th Engineer Battalion, was shuttled by CH47 sorties from Cu Chi to Dau Tieng. Also shuttled were two 250 CFM air compressors, one 3/4 ton truck, eleven wheelbarrows, twenty D-handle shovels, twenty picks and all necessary personal equipment and clothing. Assisted by the 25th Aviation Battalion, Pathfinder Section, the movement was divided into six sorties. Difficulty was encountered as the CH 47 pilot was not given the supported unit's call sign and radio frequency at the mission site. This battalion was able to obtain the required information from the 25th Division G-3 and the movement was completed successfully.

On 18 September 1966, a wheeled tractor with scooploader and backhoe, was flown from 79th Engineer Group to support the operation. Potholes were excavated and the earth then compacted with a pneumatic tamper. Latorite was added in three inch layers and compacted until the patch was slightly higher than the elevation of the runway.

The 4/503d Infantry Battalion (Airborne) was extracted on 21 September 1966 using 41 sorties of C-123 airlift. The runway held up satisfactorily. By 26 September 1966, the final elements from Company A, 588th Engineer Battalion returned to Cu Chi and the mission was completed.

11. On 6 October 1966, the 65th Engineer Battalion received the mission to construct a by-pass at the bridge site near Hoc Mon on Route 1, Vic GC XT 712071. The double triple Bailey bridge at the site failed due to overload. This battalion was given the mission to support the 65th Engineer Battalion with ten dump trucks to haul 3" (-) rock and laterite. On 9 October 1966, the by-pass was completed and Route 1 was again open.

12. On 20 October 1966, a platoon of C Company deployed for Tay Ninh. The platoon was given the mission to construct the MUST (Medical Unit Surgical Transportable) Hospital at Tay Ninh, Project Directive Bde 66-212DC-79. The Beneficial Occupancy Date was 1 November 1966 and the platoon commenced the construction of the hospital on 21 October 1966.

13. On 22 October 1966, two CH47 sorties were flown, airlifting a platoon of A Company to Loc Ninh. The mission was to support the construction of a U.S. Special Forces Outpost. On 23 October 1966, another sortie was flown moving the remainder of the platoon and equipment to Loc Ninh.

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The Platoon was augmented with chain saws, ~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~ and D4 Dozers to remove stumps from the area. Mission is continuing at present, with estimated date of completion of 30 November 1966.

14. During this quarter a vigorous training program was implemented. The program is designed to orient and train newly arrived personnel on many important facets of the Republic of Vietnam, the battalion, TO&E weapons, etc. The program is three and one-half days long and includes the following subjects:

Welcome and Initial Briefing; History of Battalion & Vietnam; Battalion Organization; Operation and Friendly Forces; Enemy Forces and Security; Personnel Actions; Religious Activities and Civic Action; Health and Disease in RVN; First Aid for Individual Soldier; Safety; TAERS: Operation of crew served weapons - Familiarization Firing M-60, Cal 50, M-79, hand grenade; CBR Operations; Safeguarding Defense Information, SAEDA, Clandestine Surveillance & Listening Devices; Rogers Rangers; Nine Rules Card, Code of Conduct, Geneva Convention, Sentry Duty, Enemy In Your Hands Card; and Minefield Breaching Techniques, Enemy Mine Warfare. During this quarter, a total of four classes have been given with thirty to thirty-five students attending each program.

Section 2. Part I. Observations (Lessons Learned).

1. Personnel

a. (1) Item: Rotation of Personnel

(2) Discussion: The battalion within the past forty-five (45) days has experienced a heavy input of approximately two hundred and fifty (250) replacements necessitated by normal rotation of approximately two hundred and twenty (220) CONUS returnees, of which many were noncommissioned officers.

(3) Observations: Some of the personnel turbulence experienced within the past forty-five (45) days should again be expected twelve months from now.

2. Operations

a. (1) Item: Palletizing material for air lift.

(2) Discussion: During the quarter the battalion was engaged in two (2) helilift combat support operations of a platoon sized unit. The two (2) missions were Dau Tieng Airfield Repair, 16 Sep 66, and Loc Ninh (Special Forces Camp Site Preparation), 23 Oct 66. CH 47 transportation was used in both mission. For the Dau Tieng mission, equipment to be transported was not palletized. For the Loc Ninh mission, equipment was palletized, and a rough terrain forklift was used for loading. Loading time was shortened considerably when palletized loading was utilized.

(3) Observations: Palletizing loose construction material and equipment can effectively reduce transportation time during helilift operations.

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b. (1) Item: Air Lift ~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

(2) Discussion: The helicopter pilots for the helilift for the Dau Ticong Operation did not have the frequency and call sign of the supported unit at the mission site. This battalion was not aware of this requirement and considerable delay evolved until the information was obtained from the 25th Division Headquarters.

(3) Observations: Units being airlifted to combat support operations must have the frequency and call sign of the supported unit at the mission site available to the helicopter pilots.

c. (1) Item: Helicopter Support For Combat Operations

(2) Discussion: During the combat operations this unit supported during the quarter, helicopter support was, for this battalion, not adequate. This unit has no organic helicopters and basically has no means to maintain physical contact with its elements in non-secure areas. Consequently non-organic helicopter support, or air support of another type, is not only desired but necessary.

(3) Observations: Supply (rations, repair parts for equipment, and POL) and liaison between Hqs and field units are items which cannot be neglected on combat missions and aircraft must be made available on a priority basis for this purpose.

d. (1) Item: Horizontal Construction During Rainy Season

(2) Discussion: Considerable difficulty was experienced with the construction of roads and hardstands during the monsoon season.

(3) Observations: In order to construct a hardstand properly during the rainy season the laterite must be dumped, spread, crowned, and compacted in small sections. In effect, the hardstand grows from the entrance way with the dump trucks and other equipment rolling over the previously dumped fill material providing continuous compaction.

e. (1) Item: Aggregate Substitute

(2) Discussion: A company of this unit, located in Tay Ninh, developed a substitute for gravel aggregate for concrete to the non-availability of crushed material at their location. Washed laterite chunks were used as a substitute.

(3) Observations: This is a slow and time consuming procedure, since all fines must be removed in as far as possible. However, it is successful and no problem has arisen with the concrete pads poured with laterite chunks as aggregate.

f. (1) Item: Quonset Construction During the Rainy Season

(2) Discussion: Basically, there are two methods of quonset erection. One is to put the masonite on the arched metal ribs first, then lay the insulation on the masonite, and finally put the sheet metal on the exterior. The second method is the reverse of the first: sheet metal, insulation, then masonite. The most rapid method is the first method stated due to ease of the insulation installation. However, this method should not be used during the rainy season.

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(3) Observations: During the rainy season the masonite or the masonite and insulation will get wet. This will cause the masonite to warp and the insulation to rot.

g. (1) Item: Substitute Anchor Bolts

(2) Discussion: In the event anchor bolts are not available, a substitute that works effectively is nails which are set into the concrete, point up.

(3) Observation: Nails are a good substitute for anchor bolts but if used should be set in the concrete at closer intervals than the bolts and should extend enough to be bent over the sill.

h. (1) Item: Acetylene & MAPP Gas System

(2) Discussion: This unit has been involved in several tunnel demolition missions utilizing the acetylene & MAPP Gas System.

(3) Observations: The explosive force created by the detonation of the MAPP or acetylene gas is not powerful enough to destroy a tunnel with over 6 feet of overburden without using a minimum of 2 blasts. Tunnels with 8 to 12 feet of overburden require more than two blasts for complete destruction.

3. Training - no information

4. Intelligence - no information

5. Logistics

a. Item: D7E Tractors

b. Discussion: This unit recently received D7E tractors to replace HD-16M models. However the dozers arrived with no operator and organizational maintenance tools, no repair parts, and inadequate interim technical manuals to properly maintain the equipment.

c. Observation: Maintenance of equipment is essential in order to keep an item functional. Engineer Equipment can "make or break" the engineer effort. It is imperative that OWM, PLL, and TM's be supplied with all equipment.

6. Other - no information

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Section 2, Part II, Recommendations:

1. Personnel.

a. Recommendation: Reassignment within 18th Engineer Brigade of an individual for an individual basis with like grade and qualifications, so as to minimize the impact created by personnel rotation during the months of September and October 1967.

b. Recommendation: Commanders provide a minimum of 1 day overlap for Officer and NCO replacements so as to allow for thorough orientation on key NCO and Officer position.

2. Operations.

a. Recommendation: Units preparing for combat support operations should palletize equipment where practical prior to helilift operations in order to facilitate loading.

b. Recommendation: All units being supported with helilift operations have radio frequencies and call signs available for pilots.

c. Recommendation: Units supporting combat operations with no organic air capability should be provided with air support with a minimum of every other day. This should be provided for, prior to commitment.

d. Recommendation: During rainy season, laterite pads should be constructed in increments in order to minimize rain damage during construction.

e. Recommendation: Washed laterite chunks should be used as a substitute aggregate only in the event gravel is not available.

f. Recommendation: During the rainy season, the insulation and masonry on a roundwall quonset should be installed only after the sheet metal is on.

g. Recommendation: Nails with point up be set into concrete whenever anchor bolts are not available.

h. Recommendation: Tunnels with thick layers of overburden (6+ft) be destroyed by utilizing conventional explosives. Acetylene or MAPP gas should not be utilized for tunnels of the specifications mentioned.

3. Training - No recommendations.

4. Intelligence - No recommendations.

5. Logistics: All equipment furnished to units be inspected to insure that the equipment has TM's, OVM, and PLL essential for operator and organizational maintenance prior to delivery.

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JAMES F BOYLAN
LTC, CE
Commanding

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EGE-3 (14 Nov 66)

1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned (RCS CSFOR-65), for Quarterly Period Ending (31 Oct 66) (Aug Sep Oct)

HEADQUARTERS, 79th Engineer Group, APO 96491, 20 November 1966

THRU: Commanding General, 18th Engineer Brigade, APO 96307

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army (ACSFOR-DA), Washington, D.C. 20310

1. The quarterly operational report of lessons learned for the 588th Engineer Battalion is forwarded.

2. The following comments and recommendations are submitted for your consideration:

a. Helilift and Aircraft Support. This headquarters is currently compiling an SOP for helilift operations. This will include the recommendations of the battalion commander. This headquarters agrees with the need for command and control aircraft for units engaging in the support of combat operations.

b. Nails as Substitutes for Anchor Bolts. This headquarters does not concur with the use of nails as substitutes for anchor bolts.

c. OVM and Related Equipment. This headquarters concurs with the recommendation that OVM, repair parts, and the appropriate manuals be provided with equipment at the time of issue.

d. Personnel. The rotational impact on units having a heavy turnover of personnel at one time is under study at this headquarters.


WALTER C. GELLINI
LTC CE
Commanding

Copies furnished
ACSFOR DA (Direct)
CO, 588th Engr Bn

AVBC-C

2d Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned (RCS CSFOR-65) for Quarterly Period Ending 31 October 1966

Headquarters, 18th Engineer Brigade, APO 96307 31 DEC 1966

TO: Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, ATTN: AVC-DH, APO 96307

1. The subject report, submitted by the 588th Engineer Battalion (Cbt), is considered an accurate report of organizational activities for the reporting period.

2. This headquarters concurs with the observations and recommendations of the submitting and indorsing commanders, subject to the following added comments:

a. Section 2, Part I, para 1a(1), Section 2, Part II, para 1a, and para 2d, 1st Ind. Item: Rotation of Personnel. Concur. On 13 December 1966, this headquarters published a circular which will alleviate this problem.

b. Section 2, Part I, para 2b(1), and Section 2, Part II, para 2b. Item: Air Lift Operations. Concur. This is a matter which is being handled at the group level to insure that necessary coordination is effected on SCI items when they are involved in tactical operations with other units.

c. Section 2, Part I, para 2c(1), Section 2, Part II, para 2c, and para 2a, 1st Ind. Item: Helicopter Support for Combat Operations. Concur. This headquarters has submitted a letter outlining minimum essential helicopter support necessary to accomplish missions for engineer units in Vietnam.

d. Section 2, Part I, para 2d(1), and Section 2, Part II, para 2d. Item: Horizontal Construction During Rainy Season. Concur. When horizontal construction utilizing laterite as a base or surface course is being accomplished during rainy periods it is difficult to control and compact. Compaction of most laterites to maximum density is most readily obtained at a moisture content of 10%.

e. Section 2, Part I, para 2e(1), and Section 2, Part II, para 2e. Item: Aggregate Substitute. Concur. Laterite aggregate is an adequate substitute in concrete for slab construction where only a filler material is required. Laterite aggregate is not suitable for reinforced concrete frame construction because of its low shear strength, nor is it suitable for concrete slabs subjected to extreme abrasion.

f. Section 2, Part I, para 2g(1), Section 2, Part II, para 2g, and para 2b, 1st Ind. Item: Substitute Anchor Bolts. Concur. This headquarters considers the use of 60 penny nails as an emergency substitute for anchor bolts a suitable solution for the single story light frame construction in RVN. It is not recommended as a standard practice.

AVBC-C

2d Ind

1 DEC 1966

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned (RCS CSFOR-65) for Quarterly Period Ending 31 October 1966

g. Section 2, Part I, para 2h(1), and Section 2, Part II, para 2h. Item: Acetylene and MAPP Gas System. Concur. This information has been relayed to OCE and DA based upon previous observations made by the 588th Engr Br. and other divisional engineer battalions.

h. Section 2, Part I, para 5a, Section 2, Part II, para 5, and para 2c, 1st Ind. Item: D7E Tractors. Non-Concur. Required tools^{may} be requisitioned through normal channels. Tools required are presently on hand in the 159th Engineer Group (Const).

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Wayne J. Reynolds
WAYNE J. REYNOLDS
Major, CE
Adjutant

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AVHGC-DH (14 Nov 66)

3d Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the Period Ending
31 October 1966 (RCS CSFOR-65)

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96307 22 JAN 1967

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-OT
APO 96558

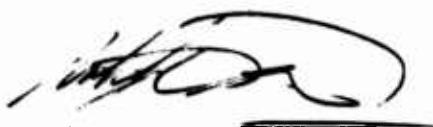
1. This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the period ending 31 October 1966 from Headquarters, 586th Engineer Battalion (C)(A) as indorsed.

2. Pertinent comments are as follows:

a. Reference Paragraph 2g, Part I, Section 2, Page 6; Paragraph 2g, Part II, Section 2, Page 7; Paragraph 2b, 1st Indorsement; and Paragraph 2f, 2d Indorsement: Nonconcur with unit and Headquarters, 18th Engineer Brigade; concur with Headquarters, 79th Engineer Group. The use of nails emplaced point up as a substitute for anchor bolts is regarded by this headquarters as an extremely unsafe practice. This method was tried by the 62d Engineer Battalion, and resulted in a number of foot injuries to Vietnamese laborers. Subsequent difficulty was experienced in obtaining accurate alignment of wall panels in emplacing them over the nails. Alternate-and preferable-solutions include 2" x 4" nailing strips with "L-shape" nails thru them, emplaced while the concrete is wet; or insetting wood nailing blocks/dowels flush with the concrete at appropriate intervals. A further solution, which completely dispenses with the need for emplacing anchor bolts or any other fixture in the wet concrete, would be the use of the "Ramset" or "Drive It," which is faster and allows more accurate alignment.

b. Reference Paragraph 5, Part II, Section 2, Page 6; Paragraph 2c, 1st Indorsement: Concur that OEM and manuals should be issued with items of equipment. Nonconcur with issue of PLL's at time of issue. PLL should be made within the unit; items should then be requisitioned.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



R. J. THORNTON III
1st Lt, AGC
Asst Adjutant General

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GPOP-OT(14 Nov 66)

4th Ind (U)

11 MAR 1967

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned for the Period Ending
31 October 1966 (RCS CSFOR-65) (U), HQ 588th Engr Bn (C)(A)

HQ, US ARMY, PACIFIC, APO San Francisco 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

This headquarters concurs in the basic report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:



G. L. McMULLIN
CPT, AGC
Asst AG

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